

ABSTRACT

Fossilization is a universal phenomenon that characterizes lack of sufficient linguistic competence as a learner approximates a particular target language. This phenomenon was thought to be evident in the learning of English Language grammar by secondary school students in Nakuru County, Kenya given their reported low grammatical competence. This study began on the premise that no conclusive study had been carried out to establish if the lack of competence was a consequence of fossilization and whether or not classroom instruction had a role in this outcome. The objectives of the study were to examine grammatical items indicative of fossilization in the learners' interlanguage as manifested by systematic grammatical deviations from the target language norms (popularly known as errors), to critically analyze the errors with a view to establishing possible incidences of fossilization, and to evaluate the classroom instructional elements that would impact the interlanguage fossilization. The study was guided by Selinker's Interlanguage theory, Krashen's Monitor Model and input hypothesis and Padesky's Cognitive theory of learning. The study was underpinned by a quasi-experimental research design comprising a pretest- posttest control analysis. The study population comprised grade ten and eleven students in Nakuru County, Kenya. A probability sample of 205 students randomly selected from three purposively sampled secondary schools was used for data generation. Test data were generated through classroom written tests, and audio- recorded classroom instruction proceedings and interactions. The data were analyzed using performance surface error taxonomy. The study established that there was fossilization at the level of grammatical structures, rules, systems and subsystems of the learner language. The study also established that classroom instruction was directly correlated with occurrence of fossilization in that classroom instructional elements facilitated the learning of grammar to quite a large extent while lack of accurate instructions resulted in more fossilization of the grammatical item. The study is expected to benefit scholars in applied linguistics, teachers of English and students, policy makers and the general public